

Downtown Analysis

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Analysis of Conditions for Downtown

Downtown is the visual and psychological heart of the community and not far from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus. It is linked to the region's perimeter highway system via Birch and Cameron Streets (east-west) and Fifth, Wells, State and Harding (north-south).

Several plans for downtown have preceded this one:

- *Eau Claire Central Business District Plan*, 1980
- *Eau Claire Historic Preservation Plan*, 1988
- *Downtown Parking Plan*, 1986
- *Physical Survey of Downtown Eau Claire*, Eau Claire Main Street Association, Inc., 1993
- *Downtown Element of the Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan*, 1992
- *Comprehensive Urban Design Plan for Downtown Eau Claire*, Eau Claire Main Street Association, 1994

The 1995 *Downtown Plan* was the operative guide until the adoption of in 2001 of the *Downtown Action Agenda*, which will be folded into this comprehensive plan update.

Major Downtown Issues

The following are the major questions that were identified during the preparation of the Downtown Action Agenda.

1. **City Support:** What degree of financial and other support will the City be willing to provide for Downtown redevelopment?

The City has shown strong support for Downtown through its role in the North Barstow district redevelopment project and other efforts over the years, either through direct financial participation or by providing public infrastructure.

2. **Institutional Master Plans:** What geographic limits should be planned for the County government center and the medical center in order to protect the quality of nearby residential neighborhoods?

3. **Riverfront Land Use in the Northwest Quadrant:** How should the riverfront property north of Madison Street and east of Oxford-First Streets be planned? Should this area include a linear public park as part of a longer west bank greenway?

The aging industrial and commercial property does not take advantage of the amenity of the river.

4. **One-Way Streets:** Should the Barstow and Graham one-way pair be converted to two-way traffic?

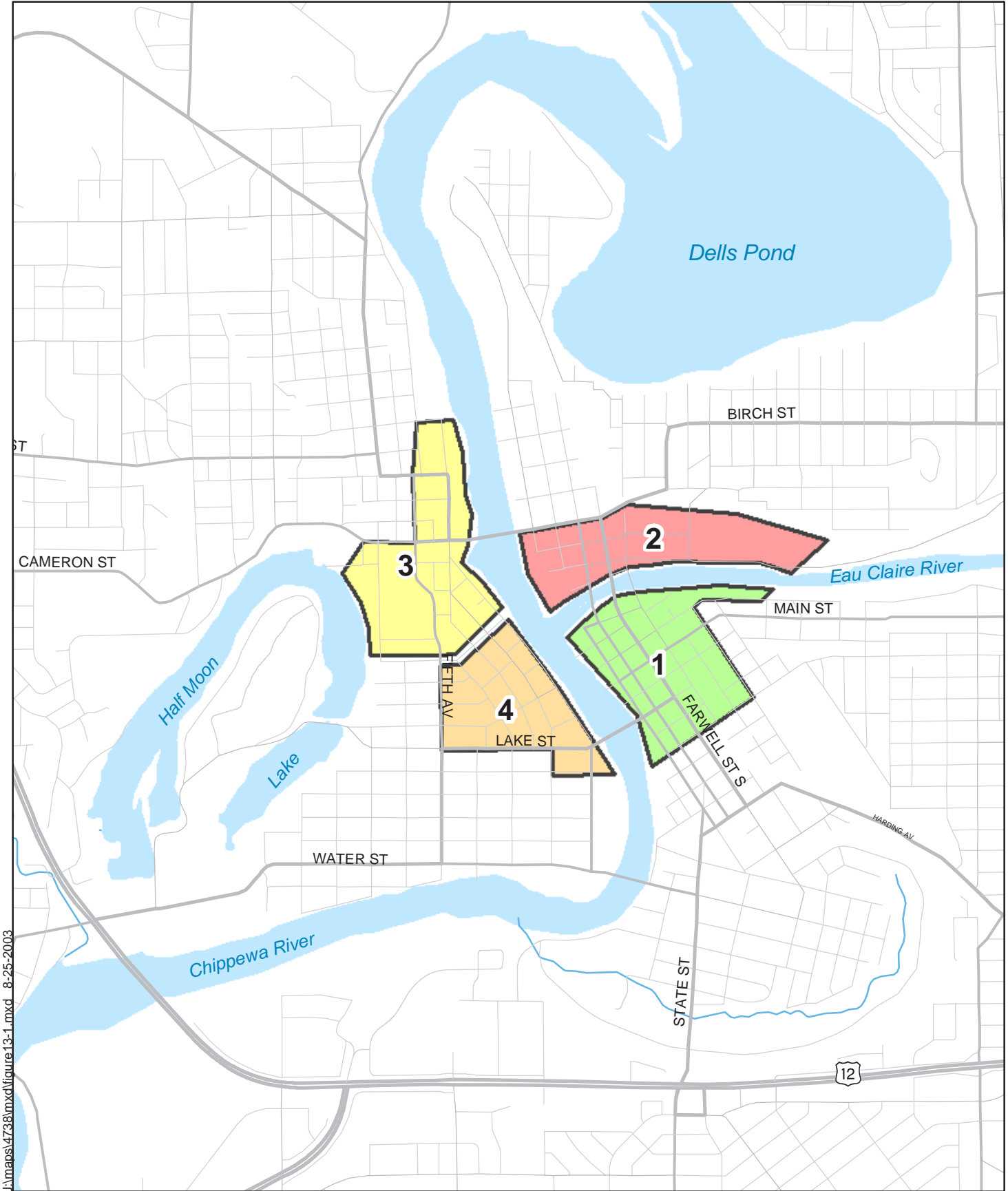
One-way streets carry traffic more efficiently but increase traffic speeds, which is in opposition to promoting a pedestrian-friendly environment.

5. **Public Access to the Riverfront:** To what extent should there be public access to the riverfront in Downtown? Should such access be provided strictly through public parks or should there be a combination of parks and easements across private property?

Many downtown locations do not allow public riverfront access but there have been great additions to the riverfront open space during the past ten years. Many cities have discovered the economic and civic benefits of providing continuous public access along waterways in their downtowns. This access is publicly owned, privately owned with a public easement, green space or hard plaza.

6. **Design Requirements:** Should the City promote and enforce design guidelines for facades, signs, parking?

The appearance of Downtown is essential to maintain or improve its role as a special place in Eau Claire on the basis of its history, architecture, civic elements, riverfronts and pedestrian environment. Many cities impose architectural design guidelines on all private development in their downtowns, some place such requirements only on designated historic structures or districts, and some impose design requirements on buildings benefiting from public financial assistance.



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Downtown Districts			
1	Historic Waterfront	3	Medical Center
2	North Barstow	4	Courthouse

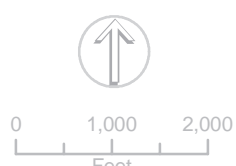


Figure 13-1

Downtown Districts

Accomplishments Since the 1995 Plan

These major accomplishments have occurred since the 1995 Downtown Plan:

1. 5th Avenue and Bellinger Street realigned
2. Convention Center feasibility study completed (referendum defeated this project).
3. Downtown Development Zone created
4. Phoenix Steel remediation project completed
5. Design for Phoenix Park, with Farmer's Market and Trailhead facility.completed
6. Senior Center facility.built
7. Acquisition with FEMA grant of properties north of Madison Street.
8. Xcel Energy remediation project.completed
9. Downtown Eau Claire, Inc., Board of Directors formed.
10. Soo Line property redeveloped.
11. S-bridge with riverfront trail completed
12. Luther Hospital expansion accomplished
13. West Riverside office building created
14. County Courthouse expansion completed
15. Royal Credit Union office building under construction. (2003)

Downtown Market Assessment

A market assessment was prepared in 2001 for the *Downtown Action Agenda* by HyettPalma, Inc., consultants to the National League of Cities, which led the preparation of the *Action Agenda*. The major points of that assessment are summarized below.

Assets

Eau Claire boasts a large and varied downtown with many assets that can be leveraged to further enhance Downtown and its appeal. These include:

- **The Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers:** The rivers and their confluence are among Downtown's first and foremost assets. The rivers are the single common element that connects all portions of Downtown, and the more Downtown is connected to the rivers, the more unique and compelling Downtown will become. Therefore, the rivers must be used as a critical theme on which both Downtown economic development and the City's overall quality of life can be leveraged.
- Downtown and Eau Claire have a **rich history** that should be reflected through Downtown's enhancement.
- **Downtown Eau Claire is already a center for the arts.** Here can be found the State Theater, the Eau Claire Regional Arts Center and Council, the Chippewa Valley Theater Guild, the Chippewa Valley Symphony, the Eau Claire Children's Theater, and the Phillips Memorial Library with its popular program for all ages.

- **Downtown is a government center** with City, County, State and Federal offices located there. As a result, Downtown has a thriving array of professional offices attracting those businesses that tend to cluster around and do business with government offices and agencies.
- **The Holiday Inn and Convention Center** are located in Downtown, bringing both business and leisure travelers to the heart of the City.
- **The farmers' market** is located in Downtown and the emerging Phoenix Park project is underway, both of which will act as Downtown Anchors.
- Downtown is home to a major and highly respected institution that draws from a very large area, the **Luther Midelfort Mayo Health System**.
- Downtown has experienced a high degree of **private sector investment** over the years that includes health specialty retail, food, service and office establishments, the Banbury Place adaptive use project, River Plaza and River Edge.
- Downtown is fortunate to have the **commitment of the City Council** whose members have declared Downtown's enhancement to be a high priority. Without this commitment, the enhancement of any Downtown would be extremely difficult.
- Downtown's enhancement is receiving attention from **active business improvement districts (BIDs) as well as private, non-profit organizations**.

Concerns

Despite its impressive list of assets, Downtown Eau Claire is not without needs and issues, and the community is not without concerns for Downtown's future, which include:

- Many past plans have been conceived for Downtown, and these have resulted in what some call "**superficial improvements**." While this might be true, it should be realized that in this day and age this situation is typically found in a city the size of Eau Claire.
- **The Highway 53 – Hastings Way corridor** is a burgeoning commercial area that is experiencing rapid business growth and development. This, some feel, is putting Downtown further and further "behind the curve" with every passing day. Therefore, it is all the more critical to accelerate the Downtown enhancement effort.
- The community's citizens feel it is **very important that Downtown be further enhanced in a specific way**. They want the enhancement effort to result in an increase in the number of Downtown retail businesses, restaurants and destinations, an improvement in Downtown's appearance, incorporating the rivers into Downtown's operations and image, and greater communication and coordination among all entities involved in Downtown's enhancement.

Opinion Survey Results

Two surveys were conducted in preparation for the *Downtown Action Agenda* to gauge the health of Downtown as perceived locally. These were a survey of owners and managers of businesses located in the project area and a telephone survey of residents living in Downtown's primary trade area. Major conclusions from the surveys were:

1. Other than parking, all improvements that rated "very important" by a majority or a significant percentage of residents had to do with Downtown's businesses, e.g., the variety of businesses, recruiting retail, quality of retail, and business hours.
2. Of the seven improvements rated "very important" by a majority or significant percentage of residents, four dealt with Downtown's *retail* businesses, e.g., variety of retail, recruiting retail, quality retail and business hours.
3. All improvements desired by residents involved the variety of businesses in Downtown and the convenience of patronizing those businesses. This is important to note since the two factors that residents cited as determining where they shop were convenience and variety or selection offered.

When asked what else could be done to increase their patronage of Downtown, residents reiterated the importance of increasing the variety of retail shops and increasing the variety of unique restaurants. Business owners agreed; their number one response was to provide more variety in retail and specialty stores. In addition, residents emphasized the importance of capitalizing on the historic aspect of Downtown and on the riverfront.

In terms of specific businesses, residents expressed a desire primarily for unique restaurants (preferably along the water), unique retail stores, apparel stores, art, craft or gift stores, and a greater variety of entertainment options. Again, business owners agreed, saying that Downtown needs a greater variety of unique restaurants, more boutiques, an apparel stores for men, women and children.

Land Use and Development

Greater Downtown Eau Claire is composed of four districts located around the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers:

1. Historic Waterfront
2. North Barstow
3. Medical Center
4. Courthouse.

A synopsis of the pattern of land use and development is presented below for each district.

Historic Waterfront

Historic Waterfront is the traditional central business district with many early 20th Century buildings, some with architectural or historic merit.

Since the 1960s, general retail businesses have been moving to perimeter shopping malls, resulting in many spaces being occupied by specialty shops, service businesses or offices. Some buildings have been demolished to create parking or to be redeveloped into new activities including housing or office buildings.

The CBD has fought the deleterious effects of this national trend but has yet to find a strong replacement for the departed retail trade. The major land uses today are City, County and Federal government offices and offices for related professional services such as attorneys. One major new office building has been erected along Graham Avenue to take advantage of the river views.

A major apartment building was also developed along the riverfront in the 1990s near Lake Street, which is a sign of a potentially beneficial trend. River views are one of the major assets of the downtown, but most buildings near the river do not take advantage of it. Reorienting the downtown and creating riverfront parks and trails should be one of the fundamental strategies for downtown rejuvenation.

Another major activity in the Historic Waterfront is the combination of hotels, conferences space, restaurants and night clubs. These bring day and night activity and visitors from other parts of the city and the state.

The components of a future Historic Waterfront District ought to encompass activities such as housing (both freestanding or above shops or offices), government, professional offices, specialty shops, entertainment and recreation, cultural activities such as museums, and riverfronts parks. The development pattern should be dense, compact, diverse and very supportive of a pedestrian environment.

North Barstow

North Barstow was until recently a blighted industrial area with polluted soils and aging buildings. A few houses and marginal businesses co-existed. The Phoenix Steel plant had been removed and the soil contamination remediated in the 1990s while various re-use plans were debated, one of which involved a county convention and events center.

In 2002, agreement was reached on a scheme for creating a major public park along the banks of the two rivers to support new offices, structured parking, housing and a few retail businesses. The Chippewa River State Trail will have a shelter building at the river confluence, and a refurbished former railroad bridge will bring that path across the Chippewa River. The adopted plan is illustrated by Figure 13-2, North Barstow Redevelopment.

The future of the North Barstow district looks bright as the redevelopment effort helps change the perception of downtown and serves as a model for similar projects.

It will be essential to physically and visually connect North Barstow to the Historic Waterfront District for their mutual benefit, but especially to help the retail core.

Medical Center

The Medical Center District is a burgeoning economic force in the downtown, as it contains increasing numbers of well-paying and steady jobs and brings numerous people into the downtown from locations around the region. This district contains several community landmarks including:

- Luther Midelfort-Mayo Health Systems clinic
- The L.E. Phillips Senior Citizen Center
- The West Riverside Building
- The City's Park and Recreation Department Community Center.

In addition to the medical land uses are two commercial areas along Madison Street plus a light manufacturing and warehousing area along the Oxford Avenue corridor north of Cameron Street.

The medical district has grown to and replaced part of the adjacent residential neighborhood.. Fortunately, the medical center has done an admirable job of landscaping, traffic control, architecture and general site planning so as to co-exist well. The West Side Neighborhood Plan (1995) calls for Fulton Street to be the southerly limit of the medical facilities, which it is now. If the medical district grows in the future, movement toward the river might be advisable in order to take advantage of that amenity.

Once again, land uses along the river do not take full advantage of that resource. Many of the houses in the district are showing their age and becoming candidates for redevelopment. The upriver industrial area is definitely in need of change, as those buildings are holdovers from another era when such locations were suited for manufacturing and heavy commercial activities.

Overall, the Medical Center district is a major benefit to downtown and a focus for change and improvement. Multi-family housing, medical offices and clinics, and retail or food businesses that serve area residents and hospital users are potential future additions.

Courthouse

The Courthouse District has several land uses:

- The County government center
- A large number of impressive, high-quality historic houses and apartment buildings, and
- A compact commercial area centered around Grand and First Avenues
- A portion of the Chippewa River State Trail, including a beautiful plaza and promenade lined with historic houses.

The Courthouse District is part of the West Side Neighborhood and represented by the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association and the West Grand Avenue Business Improvement District. The adopted plan for the neighborhood calls for limiting the outward spread of the County government facilities, rehabilitating housing, redeveloping or infilling with architecturally-compatible housing, and disallowing the construction of apartment buildings in the midst of single-family housing.

The commercial portion of the Courthouse District could be strengthened with additional professional offices, personal service firms and convenience retail and food establishments (to primarily serve County employees). The county complex is in need of expansion but the County should remain mindful of the importance of maintaining or improving the quality of the housing in the vicinity. The commercial area along Grand Avenue could be marketed as a quaint, walkable historic district with specialty and convenience shops serving West Siders and County employees.

In 2003, the City purchased the Mundt Funeral Home, located on the riverfront near the foot of Grand Avenue, as an expansion of the Chippewa River State Trail. That was the last non-public land use along the west riverbank between Madison Street and Owen Park.

Circulation and Parking

Street System

The system of streets in Downtown includes these arterials:

Birch-Madison-Cameron Streets: Provides east-west linkage across the community. Connects on the east to Hastings Way and eventually to the relocated Highway 153. Connects on the west to Highway 12 (Claremont Avenue) and potentially to I-94.

The city and County have urged the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to plan and build an interchange where Cameron Street currently passes under I-94 but the State has not been receptive to the idea because of budget limitations. That interchange would greatly improve access to downtown and the medical center from I-94 and the west.

Birch Street was recently widened and realigned to provide much better access from the east.

Wells-Third-Bellinger-First Streets: Provides north-south movement west of the Chippewa River linking the North Crossing to Water Street. This route was improved during the 1990s.

An extension of Fifth Street across the Chippewa River to Hendrickson Drive (the “south bridge”) is presently in the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan* but is strongly opposed by several groups who fear for its impact on the university campus, the hospital area, the river valley, Water Street and the West Side Neighborhood.

Farwell Street: Provides the best movement across the South Barstow area and links Madison Street to the south entrance to downtown (State Street) or to the southeastern entrance (Harding and Brackett Streets).

Minor arterial streets include Main, Lake, Barstow and Graham. Barstow and Graham function as a one-way pair for more efficient circulation in the retail district but should be studied for conversion back to two-way traffic.

Chippewa River bridges are on Madison and Lake Streets. The Eau Claire River is spanned at Barstow, Farwell and Dewey Streets. Grand Avenue (along the western bank of the Chippewa River) once carried motorized traffic but now is only open to pedestrians and bicyclists.

One-Way Streets

Graham Avenue and Barstow Street are a one-way pair in the Historic Waterfront District. One-way pairs are usually installed to move greater amounts of traffic at higher speeds and increased safety by virtue of the fact that there is no oncoming traffic to interfere with left-turning vehicles. Unfortunately, higher speeds work contrary to creating an attractive environment for pedestrians, which should be one of the objectives of downtown design.

Transit

The City's bus routes converge on the downtown transfer center at Farwell and Main Streets, giving the area good transit service.

Bicycling

Generally speaking, access to Downtown by bicycle is difficult because of lack of either striped lanes or wide curb lanes and high amounts of auto traffic.

The community's major bicycle route, the Chippewa River State Trail, enters the downtown from the southeast through Owen Park in the West Side Neighborhood, crosses the Chippewa River on a former railroad bridge and arrives at a new trailhead building in Phoenix Park at the rivers' confluence. That asphalt path also runs to the east along the Eau Claire River then north along a railroad corridor. No on-street striped lanes exist in Eau Claire.

Parking

A 1993-94 study by the City indicated that there is an adequate supply of off-street parking in the Historic Waterfront district to meet current demand. The biggest problem noted by the study was employees parking at meters on the street, taking short-term spaces valued by customers. The study concluded that another parking ramp may be needed to meet future parking needs in the event of new development, redevelopment or a combination of smaller development projects that change the current parking situation. A major office building and an new apartment building along Graham Avenue each accommodated their parking needs with additional on-site spaces.

Parking for new development in the North Barstow district will be provided by a combination of surface and structured spaces.

The Medical Center has generated a great demand for additional parking but has managed to provide sufficient spaces in structures and surface lots to protect the on-street spaces of the adjacent residential neighborhood. However, there have been some external parking effects from the medical center.

The Eau Claire Parking Utility provides nine public parking lots and two ramps in the Downtown containing 1,100 spaces. Private off-street parking is also available for the general public and reserved for tenants.

On-street parking is available along every block in the Historic Waterfront district except along the arterial streets – Farwell, Lake and Madison (with a few minor exceptions). Parking is also prohibited in some locations near Luther Hospital and the County Courthouse. Unlimited free parking is allowed on residential blocks but other locations have some restrictions: The Barstow-Graham retail area has a one-hour limit; Historic Waterfront fringe locations and some cross-streets allow two hours free or else have 2- or 10-hour meters.

Civic Center Parking Ramp: This facility is in a very convenient and central location but it is underutilized. An audit of current users would help identify desired improvements such as lighting, painting, signage, security and landscaping.

On-Street Parking: On-street parking is available in the Historic Waterfront district but spaces are limited. The City should strive to maximize the number of on-street spaces, especially when South Barstow Street is rebuilt. A modest increase in such parking would improve the public's perception of parking availability in this district.

Riverfront Parking: Quite a bit of land is devoted to parking along the riverfront in the Historic Waterfront District, either as surface lots behind buildings or in a structure. Parking is an inappropriate use of valuable riverfront land.

Urban Design

Greater Downtown Eau Claire has several design strengths and weaknesses along with opportunities for improvement. This section describes those characteristics with photos and text.

Riverfront

The Historic Waterfront and the Medical Center districts do not adequately address and take advantage of the amenity of the riverfront. In those locations, the river is lined with the blank backs of buildings, parking lots or structures, obsolete industries, trash storage and disused private spaces. In contrast, the opposite corners, the North Barstow and Courthouse districts, each have attractive riverfront parks, plazas and paths lined with housing and/or offices. Some progress has been made in the Historic Waterfront with several new buildings but public riverfront walkways were not included with them.

South Barstow Street

South Barstow is Downtown's "Main Street," so its private and public components should be maintained to the highest possible levels of quality. The street and sidewalk improvements installed in the 1980s have deteriorated and are difficult to maintain; it is time for a full reconstruction between building faces. Some of the buildings themselves are in need of improvements to the façade, signs, doors, windows, window displays (or lack thereof), and awnings or overhangs.

Grand Avenue

Grand Avenue is a compact and well-maintained collection of mostly turn-of-the-century commercial buildings with small shops, offices and upper-story apartments. Locations such as these give cities a sense of charm, tradition and place. Every effort should be made to keep the businesses vital and the public spaces attractive. The pedestrian promenade element of the Chippewa River State Trail along First Street, to which Grand Avenue connects, is a marvelous complement to the commercial district.

Historic Architecture

There are several fine examples of historic architecture in Greater Downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods. Preserving and improving these landmark buildings is a key element of any downtown strategy. Rehabilitation of these structures must be sensitive to their design, and nearby redevelopment and infill must respond to the context of the block and district.

Pedestrian Environment

Sidewalks exist among most block faces in Greater Downtown, and many blocks have building facades including windows and doors, a tree canopy, porches or interesting land uses. However, in a few locations the façade design, streetscape or land use are not convivial to walking. Many of the windows have been covered, store window displays

are few or drab, and on some buildings the original façade materials have been covered or replaced with drab modernist skins.

Also, the sidewalks and street “furniture” were built in the 1970s and are showing their age.

Parking spaces along the curb buffer the pedestrians from some of the effects of street traffic, a helpful addition to the pedestrian environment.

Off-street parking, whether in surface lots or structures, harms the sidewalk environment for pedestrians. Parking lots should be buffered with plantings, low masonry walls or fences. Structures may be softened through façade design, plantings or, possibly, storefronts. .

Upper-Story Conversions

Use of second and third stories, either for housing or offices, increases the economic viability of buildings and adds vitality to downtown because they add residents or employees to use Downtown’s services and amenities. .

Auto-Oriented Business Facilities

The typical design of facilities such as convenience food restaurants, gasoline stations or other drive-throughs are oriented toward automobile traffic. Consequently, they detract from the pedestrian environment and are inconsistent with the traditional appearance of Downtown that is essential to economic success.

Transitions to Residential Districts

Ideally, downtown would be a mixture of shops, offices, housing, cultural and entertainment land uses. However, at its edges, there will usually be a change to a predominately residential district. The quality of that transition around Downtown Eau Claire is critical to the continued well being of the housing.

Gateways and Paths

Greater Downtown Eau Claire should be recognized and celebrated as a special neighborhood in the community. Entrances to the Downtown can be defined through site planning, architecture, lighting, landscaping, public art and street design. Likewise, routes to and through Downtown for motorists or pedestrians should be defined with streetscape elements and signs.

Sign System

Although signs leading from the perimeter of the community to Downtown have been installed, there is still a need for additional signage, if nicely design. A downtown sign system should convey information succinctly, reinforce image and identity, be understandable by diverse users.

Summary of Opportunities and Objectives

These objectives or “vision statements” were prepared from the comments expressed by citizens, tenants and property owners during a series of meetings held during the preparation of the Downtown Action Agenda. They define the community’s preferred future for Downtown Eau Claire as it would ideally exist in 2007.

1. **Active and Alive:** By the year 2007, Downtown Eau Claire would be filled with lots of people, be attractive in winter and summer, boast historic buildings and interesting architecture, be filled with a variety of things to do such as dining, arts, specialty store and family-oriented destination, and it would be “alive after five.”
2. **Design:** Downtown would be “historically accurate and consistent” in terms of building facades, signs, and street light, which would be “quaint, pretty, old town.” Downtown would be made even more attractive with decorative pavers on walks, with landscaping that includes “local and regional vegetation,” with architecture that not only reflects our past but that reflects our future,” and by realizing that architecture is art.”
3. **Town Square:** Downtown would include a Town Square that is centrally located, includes a clock and foundation, and is surrounded by thriving businesses. Town Square would be highly used all year ‘round to the point where the community would wonder, “How did we ever function without it?”
4. **Art Center:** Downtown would be an art center with performance spaces for chamber music, for orchestral music, and for theater with a place for artists to show and sell, and with public art in the form of large mural and a variety of outdoor sculpture.
5. **Rivers:** The Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers would be a highlight of downtown. They would be used and beautified with greenways and parks along the rivers, fishing and boating on the rivers, and “more attractive uses along the rivers than parking.”
6. **Walking:** By the year 2007, a “true pedestrian culture” would have been created in Downtown. This would mean “people are willing to park and walk” and they would have something to walk for” such as historic buildings, scenic views, unique shops, etc.
7. **Access:** Access to Downtown would be made easier by improving pedestrian access to and from adjacent neighborhoods, by completing the bike trailhead, and by making Barstow Avenue more accessible from the trail.
8. **Phoenix Park:** The Phoenix Park project would be completed and the farmers market would be located in a “more attractive space.”
9. **Private Investment:** Private investment would be encouraged to commit Downtown. This investment would broaden the range of uses Downtown to include:
 - More specialty shops “that you can’t find anywhere else.”

- Art, culture, education and entertainment
 - More residents living in Downtown in apartments facing the river and in loft apartments
 - A local grocery store
 - Outdoor cafes
 - A riverboat for dinner cruises
 - Restaurants with river views
 - Specialty shops and restaurants lining a riverwalk
 - More Downtown employees and residents to support the business base
 - Services for Downtown residents and neighborhood residents
 - A multi-use facility for sports events, exhibits and conventions, and
 - Mixed-use buildings facing the water and containing shops, offices, apartments and parking.
10. **Nearby neighborhoods:** In addition, the importance of revitalizing the neighborhood around Downtown would be understood and supported.
11. **Users:** By 2007, Downtown's varied mix of activities would attract a variety of users including:
- Downtown residents and employees
 - Nearby neighborhood residents
 - Students
 - Eau Claire residents
 - Families and seniors
 - Outdoor-minded people such as bikers, runners and skaters
 - Residents of surrounding smaller communities
 - Tourists.
12. **Parking:** To accommodate all these users, Downtown would have adequate parking and the public would perceive this parking as being both convenient and readily available.
13. **Promotion:** Downtown would be marketed with more promotion of the arts and promotion of what is available in Downtown, with more coordinated special events, and by "working with the media to tell the whole story."
14. **Excitement:** There would be great excitement and enthusiasm revolving around Downtown. This would mean "the community and government are excited about the project." The community would show that "we believe in ourselves – we can make this happen/" Private-public partnerships would be formed to implement projects. And, an "oversight entity" would be in place to effectively and efficiently implement the Downtown Acting Agenda with continuing community input.